Caring Adults

Youth Engagement

Activities Outside of School

High School Completion

Work Readiness Skills

SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENTS

Five Keys
to Youth Success:
Unlocking the Door to Arizona's Future

Office of the Governor
Governor's Office for Children, Youth and Families
Division for Community & Youth Development

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We envision a state where all youth are prepared to work, contribute and succeed in the 21st century. As a result, she created the Arizona Statewide Youth Development Task Force (Task Force) in 2005 with the purpose of furthering youth development in the state.

Positive youth development is a policy perspective that emphasizes providing services and opportunities to help all young people develop a sense of competence, usefulness, belonging and empowerment.[1] This framework, *Five Keys to Youth Success: Unlocking the Door to Arizona's Future* (*Five Keys*), focuses on this perspective, and conveys the importance of investing in young people and ensuring that youth voices are heard in decisions that impact them.

> ## VISION:
> **All youth in Arizona are prepared to work, contribute and succeed in the 21st Century**

While individual programs can provide youth development activities or services, the youth development approach works best when entire communities, including young people, are involved in creating a continuum of services and opportunities that youth need to grow into happy and

healthy adults.[2] Every person and organization that impacts youth has a responsibility to ensure that youth are supported and engaged.

Young people are this nation's most valuable resource. When we fail to provide youth with support and opportunities, as adults, they may experience unemployment, have drug or alcohol problems, commit crimes and become a drain on community resources. When young people are nurtured by caring adults, are given opportunities to become involved in education or work that builds their skills, are supported and protected during challenging times and are actively engaged in community activities, they become valuable contributors to the quality of community life.[3]

The *Five Keys* were developed based on input from community members and national youth development research. This framework illustrates what is needed to achieve successful youth development, identifies current obstacles and provides strategies for implementation. Each key is an equally important component of the process of youth development; the keys are most valuable when they are incorporated as a cooperative effort.

ARIZONA'S YOUTH DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

Vision: All youth in Arizona are prepared to work, contribute and succeed in the 21st century

(ARIZONA'S FIVE KEYS FOR YOUTH SUCCESS)
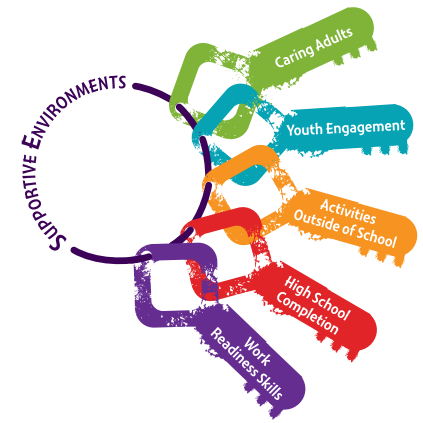
SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENTS: All youth have supportive environments to assist them to be successful

(CARING ADULTS):
A CARING ADULT OR MENTOR SUPPORTS EVERY YOUTH'S SUCCESS
- Create and promote incentives for adults to become mentors or school volunteers.
- Provide training to adults to increase youth involvement.
- Provide resources to parents to support student academic achievement.

(YOUTH ENGAGEMENT):
YOUTH ARE ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN THEIR COMMUNITIES AS VOLUNTEERS AND IN SERVICE LEARNING
- Integrate service-learning strategies into academic curricula.
- Advocate that student volunteer or work hours earn elective credit in high school.
- Create a statewide recognition program to honor outstanding youth volunteer contributions.

(ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL):
OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME PROGRAMS ARE AVAILABLE FOR ALL YOUTH WHO WANT/NEED THEM
- Increase funding to make out-of-school time programs available to all youth.
- Develop standards to measure and increase the quality of out-of-school time programs.
- Engage high school youth in community based activities outside of school to promote work readiness and civic engagement.

(HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETION):
YOUTH GRADUATE FROM HIGH SCHOOL WITH THE COURSEWORK NEEDED FOR THE WORKFORCE AND POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION
- Establish personalized graduation plans for youth entering high school.
- Create a youth advisory group that focuses on dropout prevention on a statewide level.
- Demonstrate the relevance of academic instruction to workplace needs by providing teachers with professional development on various teaching styles.

(WORK READINESS SKILLS):
YOUTH WILL ACQUIRE WORK READINESS SKILLS TO BE COMPETITIVE IN THE WORKFORCE
- Develop a statewide career readiness certificate for Arizona students.
- Engage middle school youth in career readiness and exploration activities.
- Provide opportunities for high school students to enroll in Career and Technical Education Courses.
- Improve educational and workforce outcomes for youth coming out of the child welfare system.
- Improve services for youth by working with local Workforce Investment Boards, school districts, juvenile justice and foster care providers.

INTRODUCTION

There is a great deal of work taking place to improve Arizona's education system, to give students the quality instruction they deserve and to provide businesses with the educated talent necessary to compete in today's global economy.

We envision a state where all youth are prepared to work, contribute and succeed in the 21st century. In an effort to help youth reach this goal, the P-20 Council was established. P-20 is an education policy term that refers to the continuum of a child's education from preschool through post-graduate work. The P-20 Council worked to systematically address educational alignment in programs and policy from a child's first year of education through his/her last, thereby ensuring lifelong learning opportunities.

While the P-20 Council worked rigorously to identify obstacles and find solutions to reach the goal of educational alignment, it has been equally important to consider the numerous factors outside school hours that influence youth success. Therefore, the Statewide Youth Development Task Force (Task Force) was charged with designing a framework for successful youth development to further support and extend the work in the classroom.

The result was a comprehensive framework: *Five Keys for Youth Success: Unlocking the Door to Arizona's Future* (*Five Keys*). The *Five Keys* highlight the importance of out-of-school influences such as relationships, environment, activities and opportunities. If the P-20 model of educational alignment is the pipeline to youth academic success, consider the *Five Keys* the insulation surrounding that pipeline, ensuring complete, positive youth development.

The P-20 Pipeline and Insulation

Child Care/Preschool • Elementary School • Middle School • High School • Community College and Universities • Graduate Study

• Youth Development • Youth Development • Youth Development •

Graduates

Knowledge Based Economy, Ready Workforce
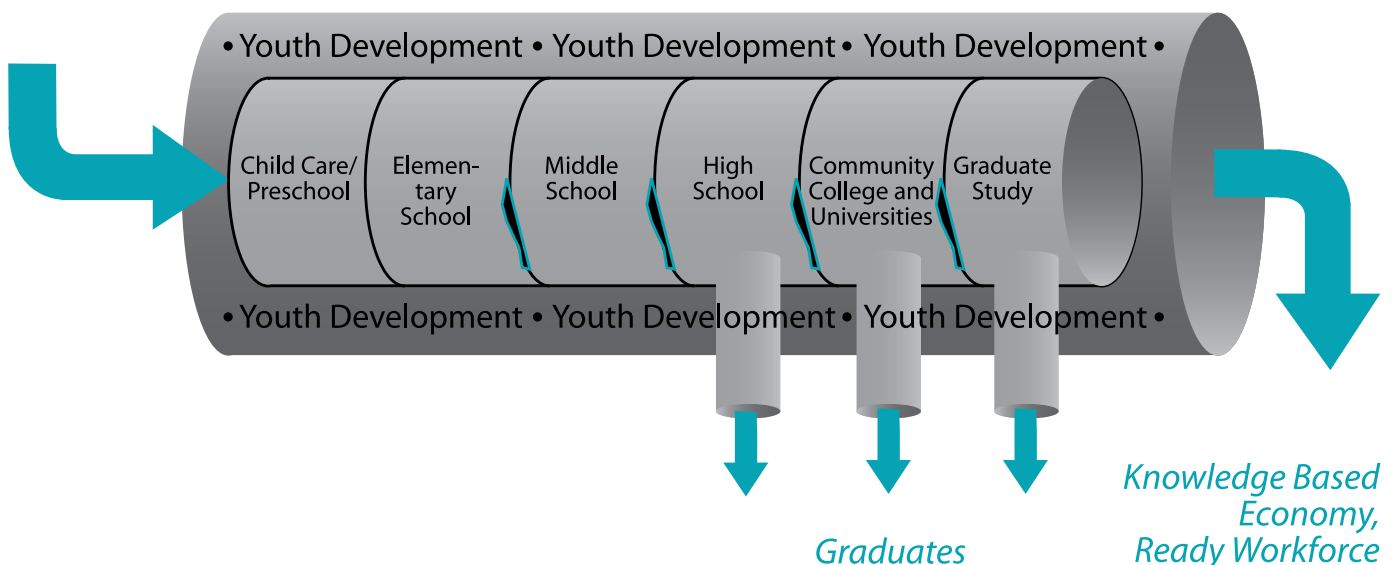
SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENTS

Arizona should not only be a great state to grow old in, but a great state to grow up in. It is no secret that youth are most likely to thrive in fully supportive environments.

Supportive environments provide the backbone necessary for successful youth development to take place. A supportive environment is one in which a youth's basic needs are met and the culture inherently works to include youth in decisions that impact them.

Basic Needs: Coordination of services to ensure that all youth have their basic needs met.

Data illustrates a number of obstacles faced by today's youth. Arizona's streets and shelters are home to 1,780 runaway or homeless youth age 14 and older, and Arizona youth experiment with their first illegal substance at an average age of 12.76.[4] The 2007 Annie E. Casey Foundation Kids Count Data Book has reported the following about Arizona's youth:

- 59% of teens age 16 to 19 are unemployed [5]
- 33% of children are in single parent families [6]
- 21% of children live in households where the household head is a high school dropout [7]
- 20% of children live in poverty [8]
- 9% of teens are high school dropouts [9]
- 9% of teens do not attend school and do not work [10]

To ensure youth's academic success and positive development, they must first have their basic needs met. These needs include food to eat, good health, a safe place to live, clothes to wear and other basic necessities. Without these, the likelihood of them attending class or spending time engaging in career readiness or other activities is low. If students go to school hungry or do not have a safe and stable home, their opportunities for success decrease.

Educators, government agencies, non-profit organizations and others assist youth and their families to meet their basic needs. More effective coordination among these groups will enhance the services youth receive and improve communication regarding what services exist. The outcome of effective service delivery is positive student achievement, improved school attendance and decreased violence.

Youth-Specific Policy: Promoting the use of youth development strategies within state agencies, non-profits, and philanthropies.

A popular youth development philosophy says that if something is for youth, it should be by youth. Youth want to be involved in the decisions that affect them. Young people are interested in having their voice heard by adults and seeing the results of their feedback in the form of programmatic changes.

For organizations that serve youth, supportive environments must include a culture and a belief system that values youth and their contributions. Youth should have opportunities to participate in the decision making processes of organizations

that support them. Organizations must have high expectations of youth and provide opportunities for participation. Best practices include written policies and procedures that address youth engagement.

Increasing youth participation in specific activities will lessen the divide between youth and their environments. Additionally, creating more opportunities for youth to express their opinions and ideas, and encouraging youth participation in policy-related activities will positively influence their development and improve services delivered to youth. Youth will feel involved in the world around them and take a greater interest on matters that impact them.

An environment in which a young person's basic needs are met and youth involvement is encouraged and supported sets the stage for successful implementation of the *Five Keys*. Each of the workgroups who will move forward with implementation of the *Five Keys* is committed to addressing the issue of supportive environments as part of their implementation strategy.
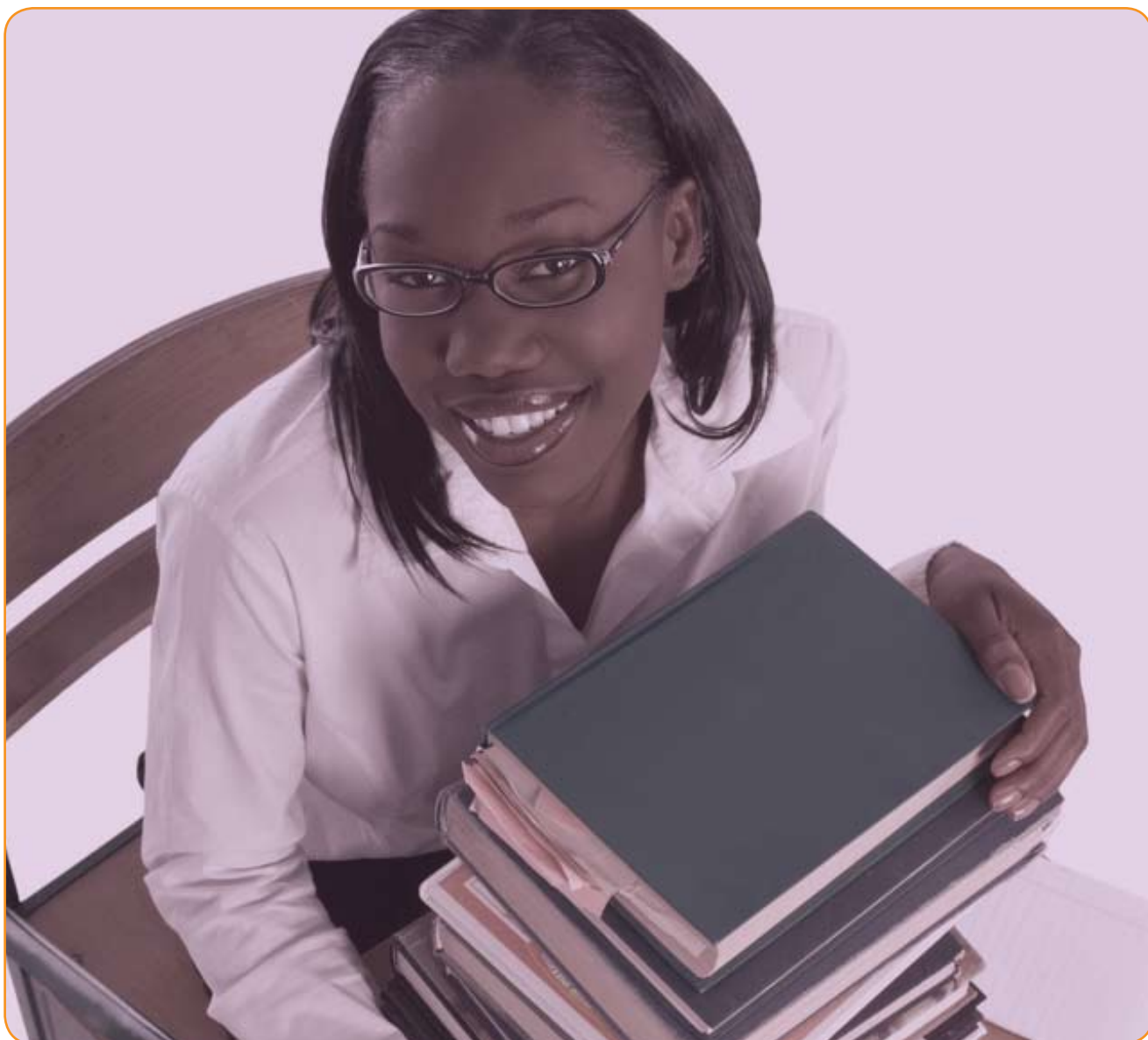
KEY # 1: CARING ADULTS:
A caring adult or mentor supports every youth's success

KEY # 1: CARING ADULTS: A caring adult or mentor supports every youth's success

Overview

Family members, coaches, friends and teachers play a crucial role in supporting and encouraging youth to succeed. Youth benefit from interactions and relationships with caring adults as mentors and as sources of advice and guidance. Ideally, all Arizona youth will have at least one caring adult as a resource for guidance and mentoring.

Strategy 1: Create and promote incentives for adults to become mentors or school volunteers.

There is a shortage of qualified mentors within Arizona. Only 2% of Arizona's youth are currently involved in a formal mentoring relationship.[11] Conversely, over one million youth do not have mentors but could significantly benefit from one.

Mentors exist in both formal and informal capacities. Formal mentors volunteer through programs such as Big Brothers Big Sisters. Informal mentors are caring adults that provide support to youth without a structured mentoring program at schools, community centers or churches. Informal mentors, who are coaches, teachers, pastors, friends, community leaders and others, make up 71% of those who mentor.[12]

In January 2004, then Governor Janet Napolitano announced the creation of the Governor's Mentoring Initiative, which encourages State of Arizona employees to mentor school age youth in their communities. At the announcement, Governor Napolitano signed an Executive Order allowing state employees up to one hour of flex time per week to use towards mentoring a young person.

> * MENTOR, the National Mentoring Partnership, said in a 2005 report that if more employers offered their employees time off to mentor, the number of mentors would increase dramatically.[15]
>
> The Governor's Mentoring Initiative currently provides flex-time to state employees to encourage them to volunteer as mentors during the school day. This concept of employee-based volunteering can be expanded to businesses and municipalities across Arizona to increase the number of available mentors.

Many studies have shown that mentors can be one of the most important aspects of youth development and academic success. Youth with mentors earn higher grades, miss less school, feel more competent about their schoolwork and have better relationships with their parents.[13] Further, youth with mentors are:

- 46% less likely to begin using illegal drugs.
- 32% less likely to hit someone.
- 27% less likely to begin using alcohol.
- 37% less likely to skip a class.
- 52% less likely to skip school. [14]

A potential solution to the lack of mentors is to create more employee-based mentoring programs. Mobilizing businesses to encourage their employees to volunteer will not only create a larger pool of volunteers, but will produce

the positive, in-house results for the business, including higher morale. Businesses that incorporate mentoring programs see an increase in employee teamwork, morale, self-esteem and retention.[16] Companies whose employees mentor see increased productivity from their employees, an improved public image, and healthier communities.[17] Adult mentors are likely to experience: improved health and self-esteem, insight into one's own childhood or children, public recognition and enrichment of mentors' family life, e.g., when mentees provide support and companionship to the mentors' children.[18]

Strategy 2: Provide training to adults to increase youth involvement.

To be able to involve youth and effectively engage them in their communities, adults need to be trained to learn key strategies and techniques to work with youth. Staff of youth serving organizations, volunteers who work with youth, faith-leaders, out of school time providers and even policy makers who touch the lives of young people should be involved in receiving training to increase youth involvement.

Youth are looking for caring adults to trust in them, to give them time to express their opinions and to listen to them. They are also looking for caring adults to work with them who understand the complexity of being a young person in today's society. Further, when they interact with adults, they would like to be treated as equals and with respect.

Building the capacity of adults is important, as

it will increase the quality of youth programs, place greater value on youth contributions and enhance community connectedness for youth and adults. To increase adults' knowledge of working with youth, trainings should be offered to adults that provide strategies related to building strong youth-adult partnerships. Trainings should focus on expectations for youth and adults, communication, responsibilities, sharing individual perspectives and on other strategies related to building strong youth-adult partnerships.[19] These trainings should be based in a positive youth development philosophy.

Strategy 3: Provide resources to parents to support student academic achievement.

Research indicates a decrease in parental involvement after children complete primary levels of education (kindergarten through 5th grade).[20] Parent participation is often as high as 90% in primary grades but drops to as low as 53% for 11th and 12th grade students.[21] Many parents would like to be more involved in their child's education but cannot compromise time spent at work. Parent involvement also tends to decrease with parents who have achieved lower levels of education, earn a low income, live below the poverty level and/or do not speak English as their primary language.[22] Youth who are (assumedly) most at-risk are least likely to have their parents involved in their education.

Parental Involvement[23]	
Over 90%	Kindergarten through fifth grade
75%	Middle school students
59%	Ninth through tenth grades
53%	Eleventh through twelfth grades

Many studies have shown the successful, positive correlation between a student's success and the level of his or her parents' involvement in his/her child's education. Meaningful parent

involvement can lead to impactful results. Numerous sources have shown that when parents are involved in youth activities, students are more likely to:[24]

- Earn higher grades and test scores and enroll in higher-level academic programs
- Be promoted in school
- Attend school regularly
- Exhibit appropriate social skills, improve behavior and adapt well to school
- Graduate from high school and continue on to post-secondary education

There are a number of ways for parents to become involved in their child's education, regardless of their circumstances or situation. Resource guides should be created and provided to direct parents past obstacles to being involved in their children's lives. This type of resource could be distributed at schools, businesses, medical offices and at religious institutions. Further, a statewide web-based resource could be constructed to provide information on available resources and offer advice to parents.

It would also be beneficial to establish and fund family resource centers in low-income areas or in

Joyce L. Epstein, Ph.D., of Johns Hopkins University's Center on School, Family and Community Partnerships has identified six types of parent involvement: (1) assisting families with communicating, (2) parenting, (3) student learning at home, (4) volunteering, (5) school decision-making, and (6) collaborating with the community. Opportunities for parental involvement that fall under these six categories include: supporting youth with their homework, serving on school site councils, volunteering at school events, establishing solid communication links between home and school and creating a quiet learning environment at home.[25]

The Knowledge is Power Program, whose mission is to educate low-income and minority students, requires that parents and students sign a pledge at the beginning of the school year that communicates expectations for student behavior and work.[26]

communities demonstrating poor academic results. Centers would facilitate communication between parents and educators, educate parents on the requirements of high school graduation/college entrance and provide constant support to students with homework and tutoring. Centers can also offer virtual assistance to students and parents online and via hotlines. These centers have the potential to serve as a significant link between students and schools after the traditional school hours.

KEY # 2: YOUTH ENGAGEMENT:
Youth are actively engaged in their communities as volunteers and in service learning
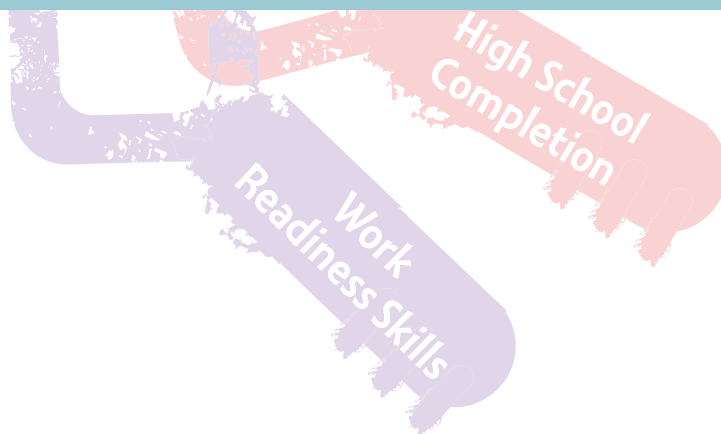
KEY # 2: YOUTH ENGAGEMENT: Youth are actively engaged in their communities as volunteers and in service learning

Overview

As previously stated, a popular youth development philosophy states that if something is 'for' youth, it should be 'by' youth, inferring that youth should be part of the discussion on issues that impact them.

Many youth do not have the support necessary to take advantage of opportunities that exist to contribute to their environments such as youth

councils, community activities, etc. There is a significant need to increase participation in this sort of activity.

The positive effects of youth civic engagement and volunteerism extend beyond youth themselves. Neighborhoods, organizations and fellow citizens reap the benefits of youth efforts in the community. Involving youth in community activities creates more effective programs to serve them, generates sound policy, strengthens the community and develops future leaders.

Student civic engagement can include community-based volunteer projects, service-learning courses, participation on state and municipal boards and commissions, sitting on boards of directors and student philanthropy projects. UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute found that youth volunteers are more likely to exhibit a strong academic performance and to graduate from high school than those who do not volunteer.[27] Civic engagement also builds greater relevancy between school and future careers through opportunities for experiential learning and real-world application. In a recent study by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 81% of youth said that providing opportunities to see the connections between school and work will keep more youth in school instead of dropping out.[28]

Strategy 1: Integrate service-learning strategies into academic curricula.

Volunteer and civic engagement opportunities should be modeled to reveal real world connections, such as in the service-learning program. Service-learning is a method that actively involves students in service experiences that meet community needs. Service-learning components are integrated into the students' academic curriculum and provides structured time for students to think, talk or write about their experiences. Incorporating community service and engagement into traditional curricula provides students with a meaningful way to contribute to their community while earning academic credit.

The Corporation for National and Community Service reports that service learning has a positive impact on student grades and attendance and in developing a young person's sense of social responsibility. Service learning has shown to be effective in helping students learn

through engagement, critical thinking, writing, community connectedness and in developing compassion for the community.[31]

Key elements of service-learning as identified by the National Youth Leadership Council include:[32]

- Youth involvement in identification of community needs and how to meet those needs
- Connections to academics and curricula
- Reflection of the learning process and feedback on the project
- Partnerships between youth and the community
- Action to plan, implement and celebrate the service project

Strategy 2: Advocate that student volunteer or work hours earn elective credit in high school.

Recent numbers show that youth who have been involved in community service as a school activity are more likely to volunteer independently, in contrast to the students who did not participate in a school-based volunteer project. [33] A secondary benefit of service-learning is that it allows students to accomplish two things simultaneously; they can contribute to the community and further their education at the same time. Time spent constructively outside of the classroom should count toward academic credit to relieve a burden that many students face; juggling work on top of school, extra-curricular and family responsibilities. Many youth have said that working while concurrently attending high school is one of their top stressors, and is a top reason to drop out-of-school. When asked if they would like to receive school credit for

The "Youth Helping America" report reveals that students who show academic improvement are more likely volunteers inside or outside of school.[29] Further, volunteering has shown to reduce the risk factors that negatively impact academic performance. The Search Institute has reported that "youth who volunteer just one hour a week are 50% less likely to abuse drugs, alcohol, cigarettes or to engage in destructive behavior."[30]

community efforts, youth have affirmed how greatly this could support them and their peers, and how much stress would be alleviated.

Strategy 3: Create a statewide recognition program to honor outstanding youth volunteer contributions.

The 2008 Arizona Youth Survey, commissioned by the Arizona Criminal Justice Commission, found that there are insufficient opportunities for youth to be recognized for their contributions to the community. Statewide coordination of youth initiatives and civic efforts would allow adults and youth to work together to promote positive activities.[34] It has been demonstrated that youth are more likely to volunteer when the actions garner positive reinforcement. To facilitate this, a statewide award program could be created to honor youth achievement in the community. On a local level, youth could be given tribute in an annual awards ceremony or after a project is completed. Regardless of the format or formality of this recognition, it would reinforce the positive attributes that youth have learned through their volunteer efforts and support their continued efforts.
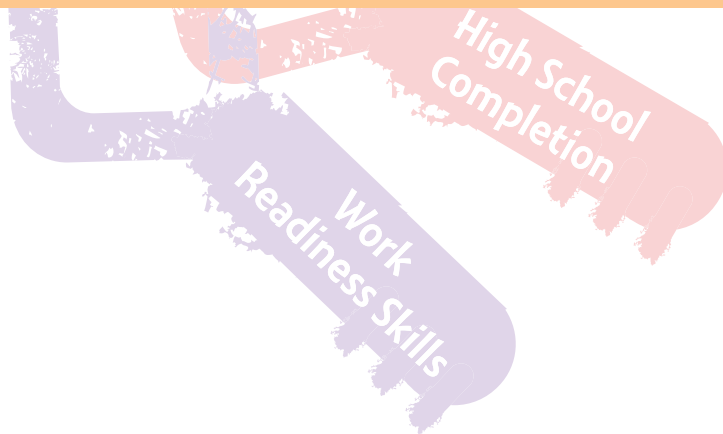
KEY # 3: ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL:
Out-of-school time programs are available for all youth who want/need them

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Overview

Arizona youth need opportunities to participate in safe, high quality programs during the hours they are not in school. This includes before-school

programs, after-school programs, athletics, summer camps, faith-based activities, parks and recreation programs and other extra-curricular activities. Participation in out-of-school programs promotes healthy development, career exploration and academic achievement, and will reduce youth involvement in unconstructive activities.

Extra-curricular programs have a positive effect on youth development, civic engagement, academic achievement and safety. Unfortunately, only 12% of Arizona's K-12 youth currently participate in after school programs, and 30% of Arizona's K-12 youth are responsible for taking care of themselves after school.[35]

Overall, youth who are in self care are more likely to use drugs and alcohol, have higher levels of stress and anger, and to demonstrate an inferior academic performance.[38] While many younger children participate in activities or childcare after school hours, youth typically stop participating in traditional after school programs when they reach the age where they are able to stay home alone. On school days, the hours of 3:00 to 6:00 p.m. after classes are the peak time for youth to commit crimes, be a victim of crime, be in or cause a car accident or abuse drugs or alcohol.[39]

Strategy 1: Increase funding to make out-of-school time programs available to all youth.

Funding sources must be identified to make out-of-school programs available to all youth. This could be accomplished by conducting a statewide survey to identify current programs and determine what gaps exist and in which areas. Pending survey results, funding would be allocated to increase and diversify existing programs and outline plans for new ones. This would help eliminate barriers for youth who are unable to participate because adequate programs are not available at their schools.

> Participants in extra curricular activities have higher graduation rates, higher standardized test scores and reductions in tardiness to class.[36] The U.S. Department of Education reports that, "students who spend even one to four hours a week in extracurricular activities were 60% less likely to drop out-of-school by the 12th grade than their peers who did not participate."[37]

Strategy 2: Develop standards to measure and increase the quality of out-of-school time programs.

Quality out-of-school time programs are thoughtfully structured to provide appropriate time for youth to finish homework, have a snack, discover the arts and engage in recreation activities. The elements that make up high quality programs should be studied, researched

and promoted throughout the state to ensure that Arizona's young people are using their time in the most effective ways after school.

Standards should be developed in partnership with out-of-school time professionals statewide who can lend their expertise to this discussion. Youth should also be invited to the table to offer their knowledge and desires for out-of-school time programs. Many youth have 15-20 hours available per week to spend in out-of-school activities. It is imperative that this time be utilized in the most productive ways possible.

Strategy 3: Engage high school youth in community based activities out-of-school to promote work readiness and civic engagement.

Once young people reach the age where they are able to stay home alone safely, they often tend to stop being involved in traditional after school programs. These older youth should be engaged in other ways after school, including volunteer activities, school clubs, career exploration and direct work experience. This time after school can be used constructively to learn new skills, improve their resumes and provide direct work experience.

Through out-of-school time activities, youth learn valuable skills that can contribute to their employability and their ability to be accepted into college. A mechanism should be established so that youth can include experiences or key skills they learn from out-of-school opportunities on their high school transcripts. By including these activities on transcripts, students are able to share their level of involvement with prospective colleges or universities in a formal way and can also receive support and recognition from their school for their participation in these activities.

KEY # 4: HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETION:
Youth graduate from high school with the coursework needed for the workforce and post-secondary education
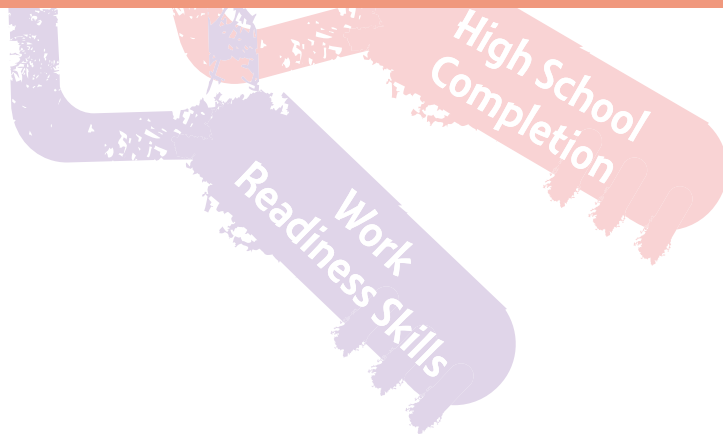
KEY # 4: HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETION: Youth graduate from high school with the coursework needed for the workforce and post-secondary education

Statistics have shown that the potential for lifetime earnings increases as levels of educational attainment increase.[40] The US Census Bureau reports that the average annual earnings for a high school dropout are $23,400, and jumps to $30,400 for those who graduate. From there, individuals who graduate from college see a large increase to $52,200 and those who graduate with a master's degree see annual earnings of $62,300. [41]

The Arizona Department of Education reports that for the high school cohort class of 2004, 79.8% of students graduated in five years and 76.8% of students graduated in four years.[42]

The Arizona Commission on Postsecondary Education studied dropouts from the class of 2000 (21,472 youth) and the broader financial impact they have had on the state. The cost

Strategy 1: Establish personalized graduation plans for youth entering high school.

To increase Arizona's graduation rate and ensure student success experts recommend promoting the "new three R's" – relationships, rigor and relevance, as defined by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.[46] One recommendation to address the three "R's" is the development of

High School Graduation Rates – 2004[43]				
Total Class Membership 63,084	Four Year Dropout Rate 4.9%	Four Year Status Unknown Rate 8.8%	Four Year Graduation Rate 76.8%	Five Year Graduation Rate 79.8%

of these dropouts to the state is an estimated $214.4 million per year and $14.25 billion over the lifetimes of these individuals.[44] The societal impact is important to consider as well, including the higher costs of unemployment and incarceration, as nationally 75% of incarcerated men and women have dropped out of school.[45]

personalized graduation plans for all youth. The idea is that these plans will help provide direction and purpose to their high school experience by engaging students to think critically about their future and the steps that they need to take to accomplish their goals.

Personalized graduation plans should include diverse and challenging coursework and

career development opportunities to prepare students for college and work. Plans should also incorporate activities outside of school including internships and employment experience. Flexible plans will accommodate changes, as many high school students are unsure of the career they would like to pursue. These plans should be reviewed and updated by youth, their parents and academic advisors annually. Through the implementation of personalized graduation plans, youth will be able to thoughtfully consider their future goals and the steps it will take to meet those goals, while maintaining ownership of their future.

Strategy 2: Create a youth advisory group that focuses on dropout prevention on a statewide level.

Mobilizing youth around the dropout issue may also provide new insights toward realistic solutions. Youth recognize Arizona's dropout rate as a problem and understand it is a concern of adults and policy-makers. Youth have shown interest in addressing this issue and voiced feedback through the Governor's Youth Commission Go M.A.D. Youth Summits, the Governor's Tucson Youth Forum, and You-volution. Participation at these events demonstrates that youth are eager and willing to work to combat the dropout problem.

Strategy 3: Demonstrate the relevance of academic instruction to workplace needs by providing teachers with professional development on various teaching styles.

Students are naturally more inclined to apply themselves academically when educators can establish realistic connections between classroom learning and real life experience. Although a large portion of modern curricula is dedicated to practical skills, students are still faced with understanding how they will utilize what they are taught. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation reports that nearly half of youth dropouts surveyed said that they dropped out

because their classes were not interesting and they saw no connection from their classes to their lives.[47]

A sense of classroom relevancy can be facilitated by creating professional development opportunities for teachers, ensuring appropriate class sizes and inviting real-world guest speakers as career resources. Teachers need opportunities for professional development and chances to use different styles of teaching. When possible, dependent on funding and availability, class sizes should be reduced to allow for more individualized attention of this nature from teachers. Inviting professionals into classrooms to share experiences and expertise will provide an interactive connection between classroom curricula and career opportunities.

The current workforce offers a range of career opportunities that were not available even a few years ago. Technology has opened doors into new opportunities and fields of employment. Traditional teaching styles and curricula should be adapted to expose students to new careers to prepare them for work and to demonstrate how they will use what they are being taught.

KEY # 5: WORK READINESS SKILLS:
Youth will acquire work readiness skills to be competitive in the workforce

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Youth will acquire work readiness skills to be competitive in the workforce

The "Industries of Opportunity", as defined by the Statewide Economic Study, are the occupational areas that hold the most promise of impacting Arizona's economic future. To continue to prosper, Arizona will need to be prepared, as a state, to fill jobs in these industries:

Arizona Industries of Opportunity [48]
1. Agriculture/Agricultural Technology
2. Computer Software and Systems
3. Construction
4. Defense, Aerospace, and Avionics
5. Engineering Services, Research and Testing
6. Electronics/Semiconductors
7. Forest Products
8. Healthcare and Biotechnology
9. Industrial Machinery
10. High Tech Instruments
11. Telecommunications
12. Tourism
13. Transportation, Warehousing and Logistics

Currently, some Arizona youth do not possess the skills necessary to enter the workforce and compete for jobs in the industries of opportunity.[49] Amongst these skills is the need for increased proficiency in soft skills, that youth and young adults often are said not to have. Soft skills encompass many aspects, but generally include the ability to communicate effectively, utilize analytical thinking, be flexible, problem solve and build camaraderie in a team setting, among other things.

There is a lack of appropriate career readiness and exploration activities that must be resolved in order to help youth develop into mature, working adults.

In addition, there are currently no measures in place to gauge work readiness and skill level among Arizona youth. It is essential to measure where students are at in order to identify in what direction they should go and how they must get there.

Several states, counties and chambers of commerce have developed work readiness credentials for teens that measure core competencies needed for the workplace. In Wisconsin, the Green Bay Area Chamber of Commerce has designed the Lifelong Learning Skills Endorsement, which is a certificate that graduating high school students can earn that is based on "lifelong learning skills," as they have identified them. Through the program, all high school students are evaluated biannually based on the following qualities: teamwork, initiative, interpersonal skills, quality of work, responsibility/time management, decision making, and respect.[50]

Strategy 1: Develop a statewide career readiness certificate for Arizona students.

Development of a statewide career readiness certificate could certify that the students have completed requirements related to a specific skill set. This certificate could be presented to potential employers to facilitate the screening process for qualified team members.

The Hire Me First Program, piloted in five Washington state school districts in 2002, offers high school and college students the ability to obtain a "Hire Me First Card" through an application process that evaluates academics, school attendance, completion of a resume and other skill assessments. The program's purpose centers on building a stronger connection between school performance, attendance and work-related skills.[53]

There has been considerable movement on a national level regarding the development of a national career readiness credential through the National Youth Employment Coalition (NYEC) and Equipped for the Future (EFF) that is a measure of the skills and knowledge needed for an entry-level job. Thus far the states of Florida, New Jersey, New York and Washington have been working with numerous national partners and the NYEC and EFF to design and implement this certification.[54]

To be effective, it is recommended that career readiness certificates be aligned with business and industry expectations and should include the three key outcomes of Positive Youth Development: positive use of time; positive self-expression and positive opportunities for civic engagement and involvement. Specifically, the certificate should include the leadership and extra curricular experiences that youth have been involved with in high school.

Strategy 2: Engage middle school youth in career readiness and exploration activities.

Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses are provided through CTE funds and engage youth in learning about in-demand occupations and skills. Youth who are involved in active career exploration and discovery activities in middle school have shown higher academic and personal skill gains.[51]   These types of courses begin with career exploration activities and progress to include specific occupational training.

Career exploration activities can take many shapes: school clubs, field trips, volunteer opportunities, out-of-school activites, etc. These opportunities provide relevant experience for youth to engage in hands-on learning activities, an important element of youth development. Unfortunately, career exploration activities are often restricted by limited funding and staff. One solution is to integrate career opportunities into current curricula, utilizing the same staff and resources but slightly modifying the traditional lesson to incorporate career activities. Another solution is to initiate classroom discussions about career-related issues so that students can have questions answered and learn where to obtain additional resources.[52]

Strategy 3: Provide opportunities for high school students to enroll in Career and Technical Education Courses.

Students involved in CTE classes demonstrate superior academic performance over those who are not enrolled in CTE classes. CTE Concentrators, who have taken two units of CTE, far outperform students who did not on the 2006 AIMS test.

Career and Technical Education AIMS Performance 2006 [55]		
	CTE Concentrators who left secondary education in 2006 and took the AIMS tests	Other High School Students
AIMS Reading	92.13% met or exceeded the standard	64% met or exceeded the standard
AIMS Writing	92.65% met or exceeded the standard	54.82% met or exceeded the standard
AIMS Math	88.79% met or exceeded the standard	52.02% met or exceeded the standard

Nationally, CTE Concentrators generally achieve test scores that meet or exceed "college prep" students, matriculate to college, attain a higher GPA in college and are more likely to complete their first year of college. Also, when at-risk students enroll in a CTE program, they are eight to ten times more likely not to drop out of school.[56]

Arizona's youth workforce system is composed primarily of funding from the federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA), Carl Perkins funding (which funds Career and Technical Education programs) and a state block grant that contributes to Career and Technical Education programs.

The WIA funds Workforce Investment Boards that engage youth in educational attainment, workforce readiness, career exploration, higher education/training and job placement activities. This system serves youth ages 14-21 who are low-income and who meet one of the six barriers to employment, which are as follows:

· Deficient in basic literacy skills
· A school dropout
· Homeless, a runaway or a foster child
· Pregnant or a parent
· An offender
· An individual who faces barriers to employment

As a state, Arizona must meet seven specific performance measures related to youth WIA funding. In fiscal year 2005, the State exceeded five measures and met two others: older youth credential and younger youth goal attainment.

The State exceeded all of their other measures for adults and dislocated workers. However, strategies are still needed to assist the local Workforce Investment Boards in exceeding all of their youth performance measures.

Strategy 4: Improve educational and workforce outcomes for youth coming out of the child welfare system.

In 2004, the US Department of Labor issued their Shared Vision for Youth strategy, which asks states to coordinate the delivery of workforce activities to better serve the nation's most at-risk youth.[57] These "neediest youth" are defined as those who are not in school (have dropped out), are a runaway or homeless youth, are in or exiting the foster care system, exiting the juvenile justice system, children of incarcerated parents, migrant youth, Native American youth or youth with disabilities.[58] These youth often must overcome the largest number of barriers to obtain a high school diploma, to progress to advanced training and secure a job.

Furthermore, Arizona has been competitively selected by the U.S. Department of Labor to be a state pilot to demonstrate the effectiveness of state-level partnerships, programmatic outcomes and development of an overall plan to meet the needs of this special youth population. Arizona will focus on youth transitioning out of the child welfare and/or the juvenile justice system within Pinal and Gila counties.
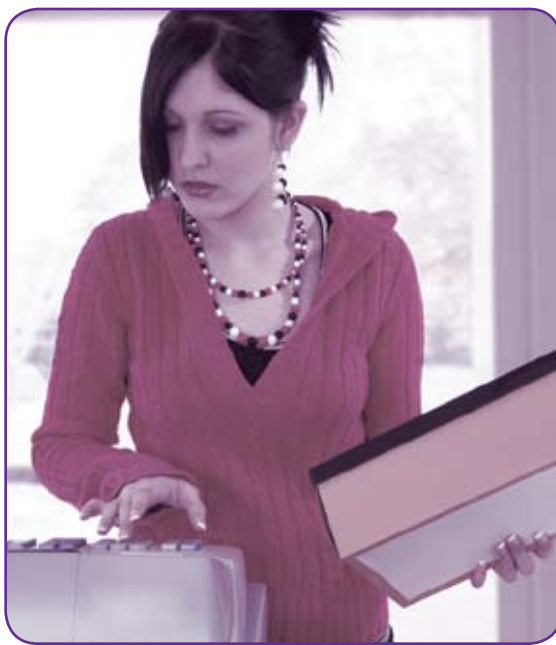
Strategy 5: Improve services for all youth by working with local Workforce Investment Boards, school districts, juvenile justice and foster care providers.

Primary strategies to target Arizona's neediest youth must successfully engage the Governor's Council on Workforce Policy and the Governor's Division for Community and Youth Development in discussion and direct them to create tools and/or policies to better serve the neediest youth. Strategies should also require local Workforce Investment Boards to report to the Governor's Council on Workforce Policy every year on their strategies in serving the neediest youth, including: outreach, best practices, challenges, and number of youth served.

Additional strategies should: convene stakeholders to strategize on how to serve the neediest youth, and to discuss barriers and solutions to serving the neediest youth, identify potential streams of funding that can be leveraged or better used to serve the neediest youth, strategize ways in which data can be shared across state agencies to better serve the neediest youth, centralize the eligibility and case management systems for youth to apply for supportive services, including job training and placement and increase overall communication and collaboration among Local Workforce Investment Boards, school districts, juvenile justice, foster care and other organizations serving the neediest youth.

The system of funding to support youth is, at best, fragmented throughout numerous systems and programs. Funding comes from multiple sources in variable amounts. There is no comprehensive source that contains all funding for youth programs in Arizona. This creates a particular challenge for policy-makers who depend on this information to make informed decisions. This also is a concern for the individuals who run youth development programs and base their program's livelihood on the amount of

grant funding that they are able to cultivate each year. Creating a comprehensive list of all available funding sources would benefit both of these groups by providing all of the information on funding and resources in one location.
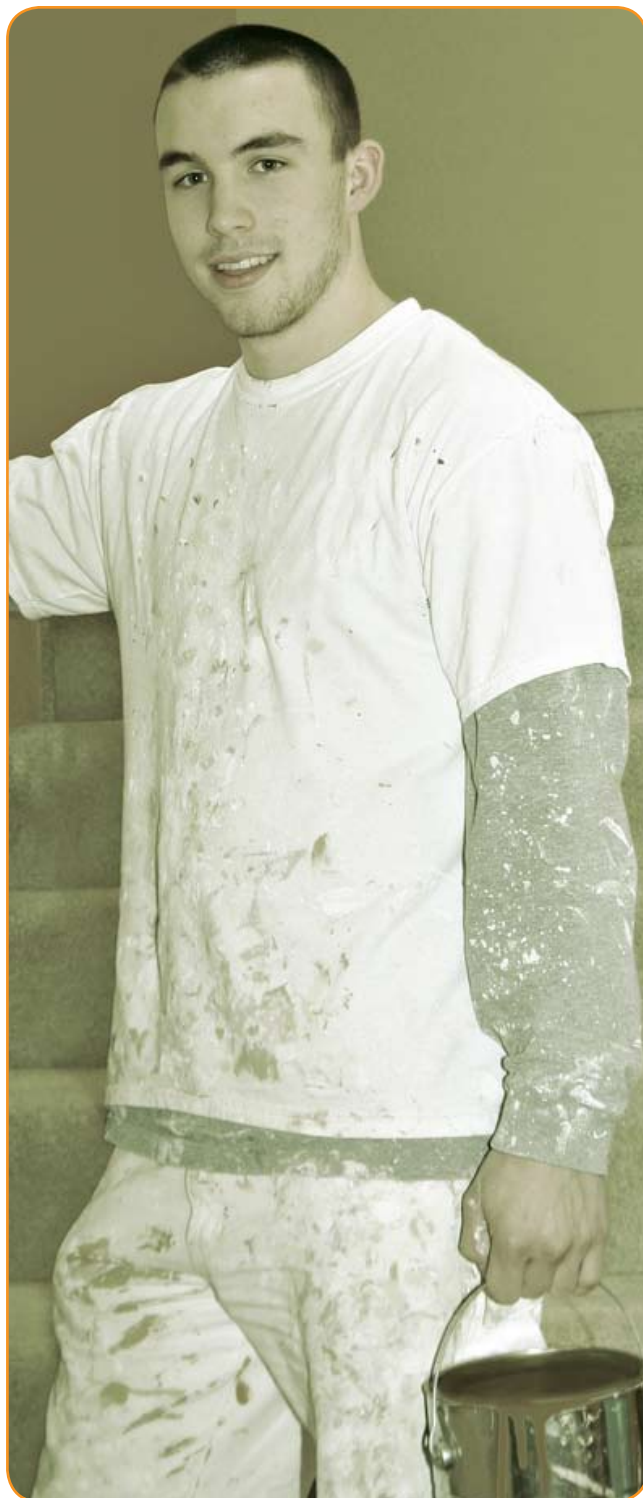
CONCLUSION

Addressing the obstacles to youth development will require an integrated approach. *Five Keys to Youth Success: Unlocking the Door to Arizona's Future* identifies a common set of influences that, when combined, will lead to positive youth development.

The primary objective behind the *Five Keys* is to ensure that all youth receive the skills and opportunities required to mature socially, emotionally and physically into successful adults. Helping youth become successful adults will initiate a positive cycle that benefits the community as a whole. Successful adults contribute positively to the economy, to their community and, most importantly, to future generations.[59]

Implementation of the strategies contained in the *Five Keys* can, and should, take place in schools, religious institutes, after school programs, community centers, non-profit organizations, at home, in the workplace and in countless other areas. Educators, parents and other adults have an opportunity to help prepare young people to meet the opportunities of adolescence and the challenges of adulthood by assisting with implementation.

Coordinating Services

Strong community coordination of youth-related initiatives and programs will be an essential component to the implementation of the *Five Keys*. There are a large number of non-profit and community organizations with a focus on youth development. However, current youth development efforts in Arizona are largely decentralized. There is not a central clearinghouse of youth programs and initiatives, which inhibits funding, communication and more.

The establishment of a central outlet for youth development agencies will facilitate coordination and thereby increase the number of positive opportunities for youth engagement, participation and leadership. Coordination will generate greater opportunities for youth to develop skills and connect to communities, and will inform youth and adults about what types of services and experiences are available to them. This type of effective communication and collaboration will ultimately allow for greater success through combined ideas, resources and efforts.

Statewide collaboration must incorporate relevant, research-based data on Arizona youth. It would be ineffective to target youth without first compiling demographic statistics and information.

Evaluating Youth Development in Arizona

Youth who have access to the factors associated with successful development exhibit improved academic performance, superior peer and family relationships, increased self-confidence and better community connectedness. They also demonstrate enhanced critical thinking skills and positively altered attitudes towards school.[60]

It has been identified that youth with access to the elements that compose the *Five Keys* have decreased violent behaviors and decreased use of illegal substances. Other proven outcomes

of positive youth development focus on long-term results such as economic self-sufficiency, good health, strong social relationships and community contributions.

Measuring the success of each of the *Five Keys* will be critical. We live in an era of accountability where those who fund youth development programs demand that they produce their intended results. Many grants and funding agencies require evaluation and data reporting specific to their own grant program, which results in individual streams of data that are difficult to evaluate. Arizona needs a way to produce and assess data regarding youth development across the state. This will allow policy makers, program managers, funders and others to review and replicate successes and to understand and correct any gaps in programs or funding.

Accurate data reporting will also result in stronger grant applications and help create higher quality programs. 4-H, a national leader in youth development research and practice is working to survey youth across the country in their National 4-H Youth Development Study. This study will produce baseline data on youth and youth-serving programs in Arizona. The Statewide Youth Development Task Force will study both the survey tool and the data it produces.

Youth-serving programs should also be encouraged to develop evaluative tools to assess their own programs. Effective evaluations should include youth feedback on their involvement via surveys, focus groups or other tools. It will also be important to collaborate with public and private sector funders to develop a list of best practices.

Next Steps

Taken as a whole, the *Five Keys* introduce a holistic policy structure centered on the fundamental ingredients of healthy youth development. The *Five Keys* present a framework for action whose recommendations serve as a map of the course toward youth development.

Countless organizations across Arizona currently facilitate efforts to positively impact youth development. As these efforts continue we will look to harness promising practices and knowledgeable voices from these innovative groups. Their work is necessary to ensure continued advances and success.

These efforts are supported by the collaborative partners and interagency bodies that include: the Governor's Office for Children, Youth and Families' Division for Community and Youth Development, the Governor's P – 20 Council, the Governor's Council for Workforce Policy, and the Arizona Vision for Youth Taskforce.

The Arizona Statewide Youth Development Task Force was charged to serve as the leadership organization to guide and inform an integrated vision for serving youth throughout the State of Arizona. Through collaborative efforts Arizona will continue to implement these strategies.

In addition, the Governor's Office, directs the efforts of the Arizona Vision for Youth Task Force. The Arizona Vision for Youth Task Force works with federal and state partners to coordinate the delivery of workforce activities to better serve the neediest youth.

The Governor's Office, state agencies and other community-based stakeholders will guide the implementation of strategies recommended by the Arizona Statewide Youth Development Task Force through collaborative efforts at the local and statewide level, focusing paticularly on youth who are in foster care, youth who have dropped out of school, youth with incarcerated parents, juvenile offenders, youth who are migrants, and youth with disabilities.

The Governor's Council for Workforce Policy works to achieve the Governor's vision for Arizona's Workforce system. Governor's Office staff will interact with the Council to guide an integrated vision for serving youth in the state, within the context of workforce investment, social services, juvenile justice and education.

Coordination between the Governor's P – 20 Council, the Governor's Council for Workforce Policy, the Governor's Commission on Service and Volunteerism, and other state and local youth serving organizations will be essential to successful youth development. These groups must unite with elected and community leaders, policy makers and youth to embrace these Keys and fulfill the strategies, ensure that all youth in Arizona are prepared to work, contribute and succeed in the 21st century.
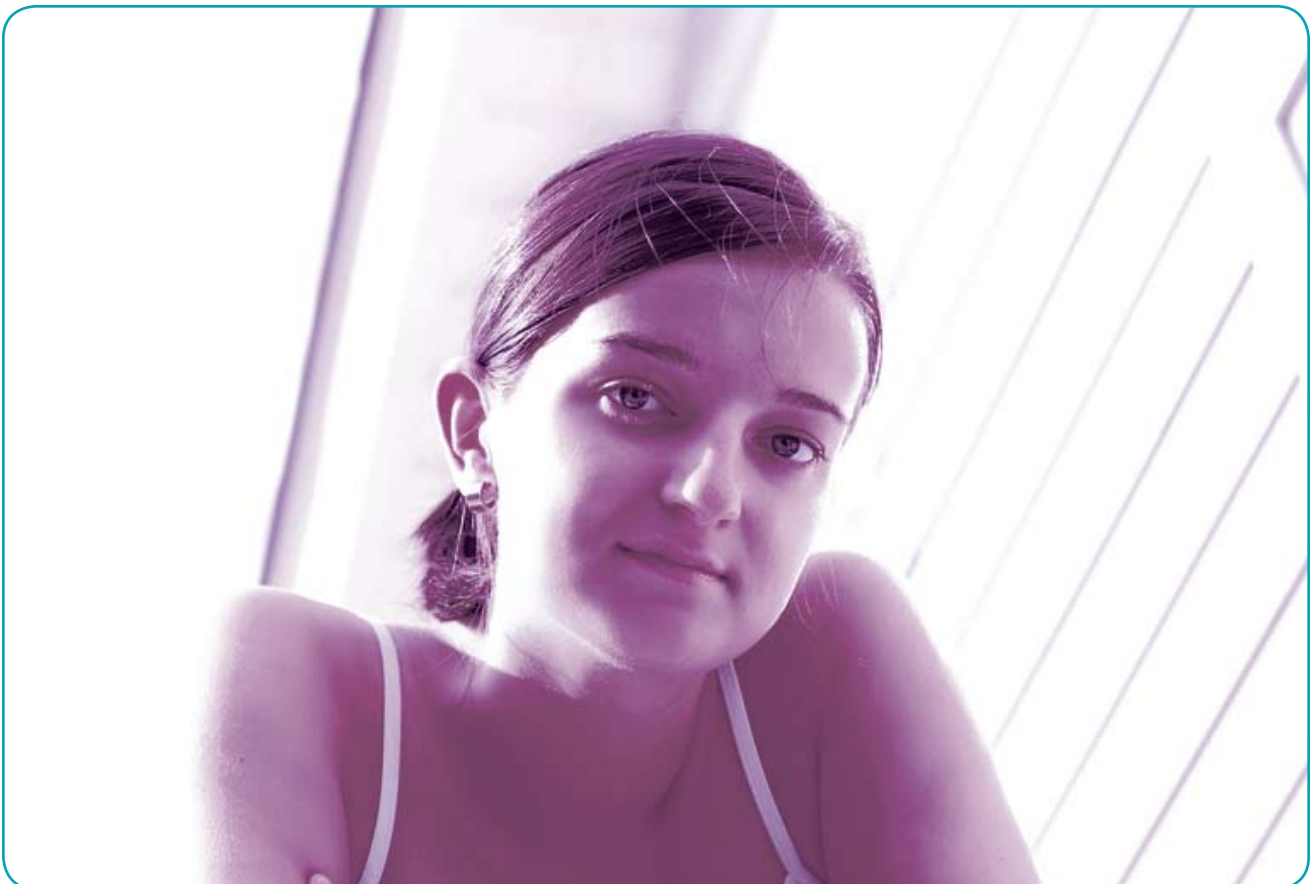
Appendix A
Arizona Statewide Youth Development Task Force (2004-2006)

Policy Work Groups

The Task Force organized four Policy Work Groups to discuss the below issue areas in depth. Each group is composed of 20-30 youth and adults from throughout the state who have expertise and interest in each policy area. These groups were tasked with the responsibility of developing recommendations specific to their policy area for the youth development framework.

- · Education
- · Youth Workforce Development
- · Positive Youth Development
- · Youth Voice and Advocacy

Process

The Task Force by Executive Order was created in the summer of 2004. It recognized the importance of including youth in this work and charged the Task Force to include youth as one-third of its total membership.

The 25-member Task Force met in 2004 to establish the foundational elements of their work - their vision, mission, purpose and guiding principals. In 2005, the Task Force created four Policy Work Groups to develop recommendations on four issue areas that serve as the framework for this report: education, youth workforce development, youth voice and advocacy, and positive youth development. Approximately 120 youth and adults from across the state of Arizona were involved in this process, as the Policy Work Groups met monthly to develop the recommendations that comprise this framework.

Youth Input

As the Task Force progressed with creating their recommendations, they desired to have greater youth input into their work. To do this, they hosted two forums: You-Volution in Phoenix on August 27, 2005 and the Governor's Youth Forum in Tucson on September 11, 2005. Over 150 middle school, high school and college-aged youth from across the state attended, including youth from rural and urban areas that represented diverse backgrounds and experiences.

During the youth forums, the youth were engaged in workshops where they discussed the draft recommendations and key questions that the Policy Work Groups asked to get specific feedback from the youth. The information gathered at those events was shared with the Task Force and Policy Work Group members who used the youth's feedback to make their recommendations more youth-friendly.

Appendix B
Youth & Adult Definitions

Task Force and its Policy Work Group members included membership of both youth and adults. The Task Force defined youth and adults as the following:

Definition of youth – Individuals ages 10-24 years old

Definition of adults – Individuals ages 25 years old and up

Youth up to age 24 are included for a number of reasons. Many funders, especially on a federal level, include the definition of youth to be through the early twenties. For example, the Positive Youth Development funding from the US Department of Health and Human Services includes youth from ages 10-24. Workforce Investment Act funding, through the US Department of Labor, includes youth up to age 21. What's more, recent brain research from the National Institute of Health has clearly shown that the human brain is still developing up to age 25, especially in areas where youth could use the most support – in decision-making and risk taking. Other advisory groups have expanded their definition to include older youth as well: the New Mexico Youth Alliance, a statewide advisory body of youth, includes youth ages 14-24 within their definition
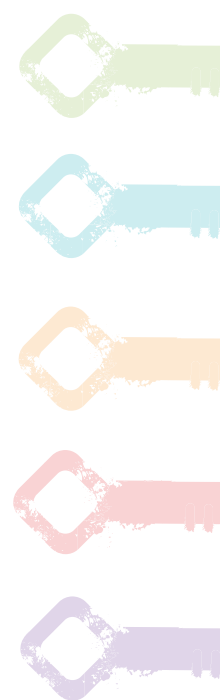
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